

THE

COMMON SCHOOL JOURNAL.

VOL. I. BOSTON, NOVEMBER 15, 1839. No. 22.

SECOND ANNUAL REPORT OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION.

(Concluded from our last Number.)

from any mistake in our judgments, upon the premises given ; but from omitting views, as much belonging to the subject, as those which are considered. We often see men, who will develop one part of a case with signal ability, and yet are always in the wrong, because they overlook other parts, equally essential to a sound result. Thus error becomes the consequence of seeing only parts of truth. Often, the want of the hundredth part to make a whole, renders the possession of the other ninety-nine valueless. If one planet were left out of our astronomical computations, the motions of the solar system could not be explained, though all about the others were perfectly known. Children, therefore, should not only be taught, but habituated, as far as possible, to compass the subject of inquiry, to explore its less obvious parts, and, if I may so speak, to circumnavigate it ; so that their minds will be impatient of a want of completeness and thoroughness, and will resent one-sided views and half-presentations. Merely a habit of mind in a child of seeking for well-connected, well-proportioned views, would give the surest augury of a great man. Now, if there be such a tendency in the human mind, urging it to search out the totality of any subject, and rewarding success, not only with utility, but with a lively pleasure, is not the reading pupil defrauded both of the benefit and the enjoyment, by having his mind forcibly transferred, in rapid succession, from a few glimpses of one subject to as few glimpses of another ? On looking into a majority of the reading-books in our schools, I believe it will be found, that they contain more separate pieces than leaves. Often, these pieces are antipodal to each other in style, treatment, and subject. There is a solemn inculcation of the doctrine of universal peace on one page, and a martial, slaughter-breathing poem on the next. I have a reading-book, in which a catalogue of the names of all the books of the Old and New Testaments is followed immediately, and on the same page, by a "receipt to make good red ink." But what is worst of all is, that the lessons, generally, have not, in any logical sense, either a beginning or an end. They are splendid passages, carved out of an eloquent oration or sermon, without premises or conclusion ;—a page of compressed thought, taken from a didactic poem, without the slightest indication of the system of doctrines imbodyed in the whole ;—extracts from forensic arguments, without any statement of the facts of the case, so that the imagination of the young reader is inflamed, while those faculties which determine the fitness and relevancy of the advocate's appeals are wholly unexercised ;—forty or fifty lines of the tenderest pathos, unaccompanied by any circumstances tending to awaken sympathy, and leaving the children to guess both at cause and consolation ;—and while no dramatist dares violate an absurd rule, that every tragedy written for the stage, shall have five acts, a single isolated scene, taken from the middle of one of them, seems to be considered a fair proportion for a child.

Probably, in a school of an average number of scholars, three or four of these pieces would be read at each exercise, so that, even if the pieces were intelligible by themselves, the contradictory impressions will effectually neutralize each other. Surely, if, according to Lord Kaimes, there be an innate desire or propensity to *finish*, we should expect that the children would manifest it, in such cases, by desiring to have done with the book for ever.

What the ancient rhetoricians said of a literary work,—that it should always have a beginning, a middle, and an end,—is more emphatically true of reading-lessons for children. Each piece should have the completeness of a fable or an allegory. Were a single figure cut from the historic canvass of some master painter, and presented to us by itself, we should suffer vexation from the blankness of the mutilated part, instead of enjoying the pleasure of a perfect whole.

But, perhaps it will be said that children like variety, and therefore, a diversity of subjects is demanded. But there is a wide distinction, between what is variegated and what is heterogeneous or conflicting. Quite as well may it be said, that children like continuity, not less than variety. Agencies working to a common end, elements expanding and evolving into a full and symmetrical development, present a variety more accordant to Nature, than that of patchwork. An easy and gliding transition from topic to topic, is far preferable to a sudden revulsion, which seems, as it were, to arrest the mental machinery and work it backwards. Besides, all needful variety is as attainable in long pieces as in short ones. An author may pass from grave to humorous, from description to narration, from philosophizing to moralizing, or even from prose to poetry, without shocking the mind by precipitous leaps from one subject to another.

Another mental exercise of the highest value, is not only overlooked, but rendered wholly impossible by this violent transference of the mind through a series of repugnant subjects. The true order of mental advancement is, from the primitive meaning of words to their modified meaning in particular connexions, and then to a clear apprehension of the import of sentences and paragraphs. After these, come two other mental processes, which are the crowning constituents of intellectual greatness. The first process is a comparison with each other, of all the parts presented, in order to discern their agreement or repugnance, and to form a judgment of their conduciveness to a proposed result. For this purpose, the mind must summon the whole train of thought into its presence, and see for itself, whether the conclusion is authorized, to which its assent is demanded. Here the reader must see whether the part, he now reads, as compared with the preceding, is consistent or contradictory. Otherwise he may be marched and counter-marched through all regions of belief, and even be made to tread backwards in his own footsteps without knowing it. How can a juror judge of the soundness or fallacy of an advocate's argument, if he cannot reproduce it and compare its different points;—if he cannot, if a military phrase may be used, bring up the long column of arguments and deploy them into line, so as to survey them all at a glance? Such a habit of mind confers a wonderful superiority on its possessor; and therefore it should be cultivated by all practicable means. Great as it is in some men, it has grown up, under favoring circumstances, from the feeblest beginnings; and the minds of all children may be managed so as to stifle or strengthen it. Of course, all consecutiveness of thought is dispersed by a scrap-book.

I will take a few examples from a reading-book, now in use in some of our schools. A most humorous disquisition 'On the head-dress of ladies,' is immediately followed by another disquisition 'On a future state of eternal happiness or perdition;' a passage from Milton's 'Creation of the world,' leads on 'The facetious history of John Gilpin;' Thomson's 'Hymn to the Deity,' ushers in 'Merrick's chameleon;' and two minutes' reading from Blair's 'Sermon on the death of Christ,' precedes Lord

Chesterfield's 'Speech on Pensions.' Surely, the habit of mind, I have endeavored to describe, is here impossible. There is no continuity in the subject-matter for the mind to act on.

The preceding remarks contemplate the reader or hearer, as engaged in fixing the whole train of the author's thought in his own mind, for the purpose of comparing its different parts. But to make reading in the highest degree valuable, another mental process still is necessary. It is not enough merely to discern the agreement or disagreement of the associated parts, heard or read ; but in the progress of the exercise, we ought to look to the right and left, and compare the positions of the speaker or writer with our own observation, experience, and former judgment ; so as to obtain new arguments for our own opinions, where there is a coincidence, and be led to re-examine them with conscientious impartiality when opposed. In this way only, can we modify and correct our own views by the help of other minds. In this way only, can we give permanence to our acquisitions ; and what is rapidity in acquisition, without durability in retention ? It is the absence of these two mental exercises which makes so vast a portion of the reading of our community utterly barren. Of course, only the older scholars can fairly realize this degree of intelligent reading. But after a little practice, all children are capable of reading with such an open and inquiring mind, that if any thing occurs in the lesson, which is connected with their own recent experience or observation, the two things will be immediately associated. This will grow into a habit of thinking not only of what they read, but of associating and comparing their previous knowledge upon the same subject with it ; and it will be the best possible stimulant to the inventive powers. It will also prevent them from blindly adopting whatever is communicated to them by others. They will acquire such a power, at once of expanded views and of thorough investigation, that if afterwards, in the practical business of life, any plan or course of policy is presented to them, and there be a difficulty in it, they will see it ; and if there be any way of obviating that difficulty, they will see that also.

To mitigate the calamity of unintelligent reading, various inventions have been sought out ; by some of which it may have been slightly relieved, while others seem wholly illusive. Spelling-books have been prepared, purporting to give synonymous words, arranged in parallel columns. On some pages, two columns, on others, three columns are found, where the words, which are placed horizontally, in regard to each other, are alleged to be synonymous. Thus single words are supposed to be defined by single words, as in the following example, which is taken from one of them :—

"comedy tragedy drama"

It is a remark of Dr. Blair, that "hardly in any language are there two words, that convey the same idea." Dr. Campbell, also, the author of that able work, 'The Philosophy of Rhetoric,' observes, that "there are few words in any language, (particularly such as relate to operations and feelings of the mind,) which are strictly univocal." To teach children that any considerable number, even of the primitive words in the English language, can be reduced to doublets and triplets of synonymes ; or that there are many cases, where words can be interchangeably used, would subject them to the certainty, both of being mistaken by others, and of mistaking whatever they might hear or read ; and it would destroy the power of aptness in the selection of words, upon which all the accuracy, elegance, and force of diction depend. Surely, if a large majority of the words of our language have each, one or two synonymous words, it would seem advisable for the government of the 'Republic of Letters,' at once to reduce it to one half or one third of its present bulk, by discarding the superfluous parts, and thus save the young the labor of learning and the old the trouble of writing and reading a double or treble-sized vocabulary. But if, as is

further observed by Dr. Blair, any person "conversant with the propriety of the language, will always be able to observe something, that distinguishes any two of its words," then a book would be greatly to be preferred, which should show that it has no synonymes. Even if our language furnished synonymes, and these were carefully collated according to the above plan, it would seem quite as possible for the learner, with a little additional labor, to get two or three words, without any glimmer of meaning, as to get one. It is rarely possible to explain any word of unknown meaning by any other single word. Our most common words are susceptible, probably, of a hundred significations, according to the connexion in which they are used. Their value is constantly changing, according to the context. It is like the value of pieces upon a chess board; the same piece, in one position, being almost worthless, in another position, commanding the game. It is this fact, which makes it such vanity and uselessness to read words, without reference to their significations.

Another method for teaching significations consists in the use of the dictionary. This is far less fallacious than the former, because no dictionary ever defines by a single word. It usually gives a number of words and short sentences, from a comparison of which, the principal idea, common to them all, can be separated from the accessory ideas, peculiar to each. Although, therefore, it is a meager resource for a learner, it is far better than any definition, by a single inflexible word, can be. There are, however, very serious objections to this mode. Should the pupil take the words of the dictionary, in course, he would study double the number which he will have occasion to use in afterlife; and it seems a misfortune, that scholars, who do not go to school half long enough to learn what is needful, should spend half their time while there, in learning what is superfluous. Nor do dictionaries indicate what words are in reputable use, what are more appropriate to poetical, what to prose writings, and so forth. But should the words to be studied or omitted be marked for the learner, or a dictionary be prepared, containing the former only; still an insuperable objection would remain, in consequence of the order, or rather the entire want of order, in regard to meaning, in which the words are presented. For, while the words come alphabetically, the ideas come chaotically. The learner is whirled backwards and forwards, carried through time and space, presented with matter and mind, principal and incident, action and passion, all in a single column. Nothing can be conceived more heterogeneous, than the ideas necessarily resulting from an alphabetical arrangement of the words; and were children to be drilled at much length on such exercises, it would argue great soundness of mind, if their intellects were not a little unsettled. Suppose a professor in the natural sciences, instead of teaching his sciences in a natural order, should go into the fields, and halting any where, at random, should take a spot no larger than is sufficient for the growth of a single blade of grass, and should proceed to lecture upon whatever was found at that single point. He would be obliged to run over the subjects of geology, mineralogy, chemistry, botany, and perhaps entomology, without leaving the spot. Nor would this be a course half so devious and erratic, as that of studying definitions, through the columns of a dictionary.

Another device to fill vacuity by pouring in vacuity, is this;—a book is prepared, in which the spelling and reading lessons alternate. First come a few columns of words, and then a page of apothegms and synopses of universal truths, not occupying, perhaps, more than a line each; some one word in the spelling columns being incorporated into each of these short sentences. The force of the reasons against the preceding mode is but little abated, when applied to this. This motley company of sentences repels all interest on the part of the learner. Topics, more alien from each other and more bewildering to the mind, could not be found, if one were

to stick a pin through all the leaves of a book and then to read continuously all the sentences, through which the puncture was made. As many-colored and diverse-shaped objects, flitting swiftly before the eye, will make no stable impression upon the retina ; so a multitude of incongruous ideas and feelings, trooping hurriedly before the mental vision, can leave no enduring traces of outline, aspect, or quality upon the mind. A rapid succession of discordant images will inflict distraction upon the mind of an adult ;—how much more certain are they to do it, upon that of a child ? The power of passing abruptly from one subject of thought to another, without mental disturbance, requires long habit and familiarity with the matters presented. Children can have neither.

But I will not occupy further time in exposing empirical plans for acquiring a ready and apposite use of our language. After experimenting with every scheme, I believe we shall be driven back to a single resource ;—and not reluctantly, for that resource is sure and adequate. Language is to be learned, where it is used ; as skill in handling the implements of an art, is acquired by practising with them upon their appropriate objects. It is to be learned by conversation, and by the daily reading of such books, as, with the aid of free questioning on the part of the pupil, and full explanations on that of the teacher, can be thoroughly mastered. The ideas of the learner are to be brought out and set, objectively, before his own eyes, like a picture. Any error can then be pointed out. The boundary line can be traced, between his knowledge and his ignorance. A pupil may recite a lesson with literal correctness, respecting the boundaries of the different States in the Union ; and it may be impossible for the teacher to determine, whether this is done by a mental reference to divisional lines and adjacent territory, or whether it is done by remembering the words, as they stand in the geography. But if the pupil can delineate a correct map of the United States, on a black-board, it is then certain, that he has the prototype of it in his mind. So if the pupil applies language to something, known to both parties, the teacher can then perceive, *whether the language is adjusted to the thing* ; and, if it is not, he can ascertain whether the error arises from a misconception of the thing, or from an unskilful use of words in describing it. Oral instruction, therefore, to some extent, respecting known objects and such as can be graphically described, should precede reading ; and should accompany it ever afterwards, though, perhaps, with diminishing frequency. Early practice, in noting the real distinctions in the qualities of sensible substances, will give accuracy to language ; and when the child passes from present and sensible objects to unseen or mental ones, a previously acquired accuracy of language will impart accuracy to the new ideas. Hence, too, the scenes of the first reading-lessons should be laid in the household, the play-ground, among the occupations of men, and the surrounding objects of nature, so that the child's notions can be rectified at every step in the progress. This rectification will be impossible, if the notions of the pupil can be brought to no common and intelligible standard. We must believe, too, that the Creator of the human mind, and of the material world in which it is placed, established a harmony and correspondence between them ; so that the objects of nature are pre-adapted to the development of the intellect, as the tempers, dispositions, and manners of the family are to develop the moral powers. The objects of natural history,—descriptions of beasts, birds, fishes, insects, trees, flowers, and unorganized substances, should form the subjects of the earliest intellectual lessons. A knowledge of these facts lays the foundation for a knowledge of the principles or sciences, which respectively grow out of them. We are physically connected with earth, air, water, light ; we are dependant, for health and comfort, upon a knowledge of their properties and uses, and many of the vastest structures of the intellect are reared upon these foundations. Lineally related to these is the whole family of the useful arts.

These classes of subjects are not only best calculated to foster the early growth of the perceptive, inventive, and reasoning powers ; but the language appropriate to them excludes vagueness and ambiguity, and compels every mistake to betray itself. Voyages and travels, also, accompanied, as they always should be, with geography, present definite materials, both for thought and expression. Just as early as a habit of exactness is formed in using words to express things, all the subjects of consciousness may be successively brought within the domain of instruction. The ideal world can then be entered, as it were, with a lamp in the hand, and all its wonders portrayed. Affection, justice, veracity, impartiality, self-sacrifice, love to man and love to God,—all carried out into action,—can be illustrated by examples, after the learner has acquired a medium, through which he can see all the circumstances, which make deeds magnanimous, heroic, god-like. Here the biography of great and good men belongs. This is a department of literature, equally vivifying to the intellect and the morals ; bestowing useful knowledge and inspiring noble sentiments. And much of the language appropriate to it almost belongs to another dialect ;—fervid, electric, radiant. At the earliest practicable period, let composition or translation be commenced. By composition I do not mean an essay ‘On Friendship,’ or ‘On Honor ;’ nor that a young Miss of twelve years should write a homily ‘On the duties of a Queen,’ or a lad, impatient of his nonage, ‘On the shortness of human life ;’—but that the learner should apply, on familiar subjects, the language he thinks best, to the ideas and emotions he perceives clearest and feels strongest, *to see how well he can make them fit each other*,—first in sentences, or short paragraphs, then in more extended productions. If the pupil’s knowledge outruns his language,—as is often the case with the most promising,—then a more copious diction is to be sought ; but if language overgrows ideas, it is to be reduced, though it be by knife and cautery.

It is only in this way,—by reading or translating good authors, aided by oral instructions and by lexicographers, but, most of all, by early habit,—that any one can acquire such easy mastery over the copiousness and flexibility of our mother tongue, as to body forth definitely, and at will, any thought or thing, or any combination of thoughts and things, found in the consciousness of men, or in the amplitude of Nature ;—in no other way, can any one acquire that terseness and condensing force of expression, which is a constituent in the highest oratory, which clusters weightiest thoughts into briefest spaces, reminding without repeating, each sentence speeding straight onward to the end, while every salient epithet opens deep vistas to the right and left ;—and, in this way alone, can any one ever learn the picture-words of that tongue, wherewith the poet repays Nature fourfold for all her beauties, giving her back brighter landscapes, and clearer waters, and sweeter melodies, than any she had ever lent to him. By such processes alone, can one of the most wonderful gifts of God,—the faculty of speech,—be dutifully cultivated and enlarged.

It would be rendering a useful service, to follow out, rightly, and in detail, the natural consequences of this imperfect manner of teaching our language, after the children have passed from the enforced routine of the school-room, to a free choice of their own intellectual amusements and recreations. I can here only hint at them. The mere language of sensation and of appetite is common to all. Even the most illiterate are familiar with it. Every one, too, either from his own experience, or from the observation of others, is made acquainted with the emotions of fear, hope, jealousy, anger, revenge, and with the explosive phraseology in which those passions are vented. Now the diction, appropriate and almost peculiar to the manifestations of the coarser and more animal part of our nature, is almost as distinct as though it were a separate language, from the style, in which questions of social right and duty, questions of morals, and even of philoso-

phy, when popularly treated, are discussed. Young minds love excitement, and, to very many of those, who are just entering upon the stage of life, books furnish the readiest and the most reputable means for mental stimulus. What else, then, can reasonably be expected, than that the graduates of our school-rooms, who, by acquiring a knowledge of the coarser and more sensual parts of our language, possess a key to that kind of reading, which is mainly conversant with the lower propensities of human nature, should use the key with which they have been furnished, to satisfy desires, which Nature has imparted. But, having no key, wherewith to open the treasures of intellect, of taste, of that humane literature, which is purified from the dross of base passions, they turn away from these elevating themes, in weariness and disgust, and thus stifle the better aspirations of their nature. These treasures are locked up in a language they do not understand; and no person will long endure the weariness of reading without thought or emotion. May not this explain, in part, at least, why our youth of both sexes, who wish to know something, or to appear to know something, of what is called the literature of the day, spend months and years over the despicable "love and murder" books, by which the reading portion of mankind is so sorely afflicted;—books, which inflame passions and appetites, that are strong enough by nature, while they blind and stupify every faculty and sentiment, which exalt the character into wisdom and excellence. The most limited fund of words, and a mere intellectual pauperism in powers of thought, are abundantly sufficient to enable one to understand a bucanier's history and all its intoxicating incidents of piracies, murders, and scuttled ships;—or, to get vivid notions of loathsome crimes, perpetrated by the unfortunate victims of ignorance and of vicious institutions. For the readers of such books, the best minds in the world might as well have never been created. By a different course of training, many of our youth, whose imaginations are now revelling over these flagitious works, might have been prepared for high enjoyment, won from companionship with noble characters, from a study of their own spiritual natures, or from an investigation of the sublime laws of the material universe, and the operation of its beneficent physical agencies.

Another large class of our citizens scarcely consult any oracle, either for their literature or for their politics, but the daily newspaper. Wholly ignorant of the language in which argumentative and profound disquisitions, on subjects of policy or questions of government, are carried on, why should we wonder, that so many of them feel less interest in dispassionate, instructive appeals to reason, than in the savage idioms of party warfare? The states of mind thus excited are wholly incompatible with discriminating judgment, with impartiality, with that deliberation and truth-seeking anxiety, which are indispensable to the formation of correct opinions, and which lead to conduct worthy of free citizens. I would not attribute too efficient an agency to this cause, but if it only tends to such disastrous results, by the slightest approximation, it furnishes another powerful argument for a thorough reform in our practice.

During the first year of my officiating as Secretary of the Board, very numerous applications were made to me, from almost all parts of the State, to recommend class-books for the schools, or to state what books were considered best by the Board, or by myself. As the Board had adopted no order, nor were invested with any express authority, by law, upon the subject, I uniformly abstained even from expressing any opinion; but for the purpose of learning, authentically, what were the prevalent views of the community, I inserted, in my last Circular to the school committees, the following question: "Would it be generally acceptable to the friends of Education in your town, to have the Board of Education recommend books for the use of the schools?" This gave to school committees ample opportunity to consult with the friends of Education, in their respective towns,

and opened a way to obtain a full and fair representation of the wishes of the public. From this, as the principal source of information, somewhat corroborated and extended by other means, it appears, that the friends of Education, in twenty towns, containing, in the aggregate, a population of about thirty-five thousand inhabitants, declare that such a recommendation would not be acceptable. In one, containing eighteen thousand inhabitants, they say, "We feel so well satisfied with our own selection of books, as to have no wish, further than to see how far the views of different practical men agree." Ten towns wish to have the Board *recommend*, but not *prescribe*; two towns, to have the Board *recommend* and *prescribe*; and one, that the Board may be directed to *prescribe* by an act of the Legislature. It also appears, that the friends of Education in towns containing more than seven eighths of the population of the State, are in favor of having the Board of Education *recommend* books for the use of the Schools.

The expediency of a *recommendation*, by the Board, of class-books for the schools, leaving it optional with the committees to adopt such recommendation or not, is a question so exclusively within the competency of the Board, that I shall not presume to express any opinion concerning it. Considerations, for and against such recommendation, may be supposed to bear with different degrees of force in regard to different species of books;—as geographies, grammars, and spelling or reading-books. In my Report of last year, I set forth some of the very serious inconveniences, resulting from the multiplicity of books, now in use. I will here only add, that if the Board should assume the labor of examining and recommending any kind of school-books, I trust they will not allow so favorable an opportunity to pass, without securing a better quality of materials and workmanship, than go to the formation of some books now in use. It is too obvious to be mentioned, that in case of a uniformity of books, they would be furnished much cheaper than at present, as measures would, of course, be taken, to prevent monopoly.

As the law now stands, in order to entitle a town to receive its distributive share of the income of the School Fund, the committee must make oath, that the town, "at their last annual meeting, raised the sum of — dollars, *to pay the wages of instructors solely.*" In preparing the last 'Annual Abstract,' I found this certificate the subject of frequent alteration. Although the law prescribed a certain form of oath, as a condition precedent, the school committees altered the form, and then made oath to a form unknown to the law. The reason was, that very few towns raised money "to pay the wages of instructors solely," and, therefore, though they had raised a sufficient sum for schools to entitle them to a share of the fund, they had not raised it in the particular form, contemplated by the certificate.

I endeavored this year to ascertain the form of the vote, adopted by the towns, in raising school money. Owing, however, to a non-compliance on the part of many school committees, with my request, I have obtained a copy of the form used the current year, from only one hundred and ten towns. But six of these one hundred and ten towns raised money "to pay the wages of instructors solely." In almost all the others, the terms used are "for the support of schools," or some equivalent expression. It is very desirable, that the certificate should be conformed to the vote or the vote to the certificate.

In my Report of last year, I exposed the alarming deficiency of moral and religious instruction, then found to exist in our schools. That deficiency, in regard to religious instruction, could only be explained by supposing, that school committees, whose duty it is to prescribe school-books, had not found any books, at once, expository of the doctrines of revealed religion, and, also, free from such advocacy of the "tenets" of particular sects of Christians, as brought them, in their opinion, within the scope of the legal prohibition. And hence, they felt obliged to exclude books, which,

but for their denominational views, they would have been glad to introduce. No candid mind could ever, for a moment, accept this as evidence of an indifference to moral and religious instruction in the schools; but only as proof that proper manuals had not been found, by which the great object of moral and religious instruction could be secured, without any infringement of the statutory regulation. The time for the committees to make another return not having yet arrived, it is impossible to say, whether books, having the above object in view, have been since introduced into any more of the schools. I am happy, however, to say, that a knowledge of that deficiency, then for the first time exposed to the public, has turned the attention of some of the friends of Education to the subject, and that efforts are now making to supply the desideratum. Of course, I shall not be here understood, as referring to the Scriptures, as it is well known, that they are used in almost all the schools, either as a devotional or as a reading book.

I close this second Report, inspired by opposite reasons to renewed exertions in this sacred cause;—being not more encouraged by what has already been accomplished, than stimulated by what remains to be done.

HORACE MANN,

Secretary of the Board of Education.

Boston, December 26, 1838.

FACT AND EXAMPLE.

SALEM SCHOOL COMMITTEE.

[We publish, with great pleasure, the subjoined Report and proceedings of the school committee of Salem. Within a short time past, that city has manifested a new feeling of regard for Common School Education, and has given unequivocal proofs of it, by repairing schoolhouses, raising salaries, &c. &c., and is now taking measures to increase the competency of its teachers. The Mayor—the Hon. Stephen C. Phillips—and the school committee, are such friends, as the cause of education needs,—intelligent and earnest, not saying, merely, but doing. Why cannot other cities or towns, —Lowell, Worcester, Dedham, New Bedford, &c.,—by adopting a similar course, where the law gives them power, and by private assistance, where it does not, secure to themselves a better class of teachers for the future, than they have yet possessed?—Ed.]

At a meeting of the school committee of the city of Salem, held on the 26th September, 1839, the following Report and Resolves were taken into consideration.

“At a meeting of the friends of education, from various towns in the county of Essex, held in Beverly, on the 10th of September, the following Resolution, having been advocated by its mover, the Hon. S. C. Phillips, of Salem, and by several other gentlemen, was unanimously adopted.

“*Resolved*, That the employment of female assistants in the public schools, as contemplated and conditionally required by a recent law, deserves the early attention, and the most liberal regard of school committees; and that the establishment of Normal Schools, affords a seasonable opportunity for the proper preparation of female teachers.”

This Resolution having been brought before the school committee of the city of Salem on the 16th of September, the undersigned were directed to take it into consideration, and to report in what manner this city may avail itself of the advantages for the preparation of female teachers afforded by the Normal Schools recently established by the Board of Education of Massachusetts.

In pursuance of their instructions they have considered the subject, and Report as follows:—

They take it for granted that female assistants for our public schools will, as a general rule, be taken from among the inhabitants of this city. While there are so many well-qualified persons among us, who, as vacancies from time to time occur in this class of teachers, will be applicants for the office, it is not at all probable that the school committee will feel disposed to pass over them, and look abroad for objects on whom to bestow their preference and patronage. Strangers will not be selected for places of this description.

Neither is it likely that females belonging to Salem, will feel themselves justified in incurring the expenditure of time and money required at the Normal Schools, for the purpose of preparing themselves for the duties of assistant teachers, unless they have a well-grounded assurance, that upon completing their course of preparation, they will obtain employment in our public schools.

From these premises, the conclusion seems to follow, that, in order to derive any benefit to the system of education in Salem, from the institutions under consideration, this committee must take some steps to induce and enable females belonging to this city, to go through a course of instruction in them, with a view of preparing themselves for the office of assistant teachers in our schools.

The undersigned therefore recommend, that two young ladies, one from each of the schools for girls, of the requisite qualifications, be selected, and placed in the Normal School at Lexington, at the expense of this city, for one year; it being understood, that, at the expiration of that period, they will be employed as assistant teachers in our public schools. They further recommend, that the sum of twenty-five dollars be annually deducted from the salaries of such assistant teachers, for the three first years of their service, thus returning to the city, in part, the amount expended for them at the Normal School.

Provision has been made by the Board of Education for the expenses of tuition, and it is thought that one hundred dollars for each pupil will be sufficient to meet all the other charges necessarily incident to an attendance upon a Normal School for one year. It is scarcely necessary to observe, that those who may be sent to the Normal School under the provision, and in the manner now proposed, will be regarded as pledged to serve as assistant teachers in our schools for at least three years, or, if failing from any cause to do so, to give satisfaction to the school committee, by refunding the money expended for them, in whole, or in part, according to the circumstances of each case.

As the school committee will undoubtedly always select, for offices of instruction in our public schools, those whom they regard as best qualified, whether they have been at Normal Schools or not, it is proper to bear in mind, that the measure now recommended is an experiment—if the result should show that no great advantages are to be obtained by us in this way from Normal Schools, the experiment will of course be abandoned, without having subjected the city to any considerable loss. In the mean time, we shall be giving evidence of our readiness to bear our part in affording a fair trial, to one of the most interesting enterprises of the age. And if experience, with us, should establish the great importance of Normal Schools, as it has elsewhere, all will then acknowledge the proposed expenditure to have been a wise one, and future school committees will be able to devise the means of perpetuating and increasing the benefits which may now be introduced.

The following Resolutions are offered to the school committee in order to carry into effect the views here given.

Resolved, That the school committee of the city of Salem, regard with great interest and satisfaction, the establishment of Normal Schools under the auspices of this Commonwealth, and that we recommend them to all who are desirous of qualifying themselves for the offices of instruction and government in our schools.

Resolved, That the sum of two hundred dollars be appropriated, from the dividends of the school fund, payable from the State Treasury to this city, for the purpose of defraying the expenses of two young ladies, (to be selected in the manner proposed in the next Resolution,) for one year, at the Normal School at Lexington.

Resolved, That the Mayor, together with the sub-committee of the East School for girls, nominate to this Board, one or more candidates for selection from the present or past members of that School. And that the Mayor, together with the sub-committee of the West School for girls, make a similar nomination from the present or past members of the said West School—one from each school to be then chosen by the Board.

Resolved, That the Mayor be intrusted with the direction and care of the persons thus selected and sent to the Normal School, so far as relates to them, as under the patronage of this Board.

Resolved, That upon their having passed through a course of instruction for one year, in a manner satisfactory to their instructors, and to the Mayor, at the Normal School, this Board will forthwith provide for such females, appointments as assistant teachers, at the usual rate of compensation, and will make no other claim upon them in remuneration of the expense incurred in their behalf, than a deduction of twenty-five dollars annually, for three years, from their salaries.

All which is respectfully submitted.

CHARLES W. UPHAM,	} Committee.
ALEX. J. SESSIONS,	
GEO. CHOATE,	
M. H. SMITH,	
F. A. FABENS,	

The foregoing Resolutions were unanimously adopted, and the clerk was instructed to communicate an attested copy of them to the Secretary of the Board of Education for publication in the Common School Journal.

Attest, JOSEPH CLOUTMAN, Clerk.

WORDS OFTEN MISPRONOUNCED,

OR

JACK DOWNINGISMS.

We continue our list of "WORDS OFTEN MISPRONOUNCED, OR JACK DOWNINGISMS." In a State, where but few of the children are brought up more than a single mile from a schoolhouse, the frequent mispronunciation of commonly used words, is disgraceful to the people. While we repel the slander of the London Quarterly Review, which asserts, that the 'Letters of Jack Downing' furnish "the most authentic specimen of the ACTUAL COLLOQUIAL DIALECT of the Northern States," we cannot deny that our language, and even many of our good old household words, that have faithfully served our fathers for centuries, are now frequently and shamefully misused. Many of our people seem to have misapprehended the constitution, and to have supposed that freedom of speech carried with it, in a literary sense, freedom of pronunciation. The former cannot be prized too highly; in regard to the latter, we contend for an observance of the laws.

As we have spoken upon the subject of pronunciation before, (see number 11, of this Journal, p. 167,) we will not extend our remarks upon it, at this time, further, than to recommend, to all teachers, to take the lists of words which we have given, and make a regular school exercise of pronouncing them correctly, with a reference, at the same time, to the common errors in speaking them.

quarries (quörries)	not quärrées,
quality	“ quälity,
quarter	“ quawter,
ränge	“ ränge,
respects	“ respecks,
reptile	“ reptile,
rupture	“ rupter,
rising	“ risin,
respite	“ respite,
rather	“ ruther,
rejoined	“ rejined,
rind	“ rine, nor rind,
recollection	“ rêcollection,
rec'ognise,	“ recog'nise,
realm	“ realum,
really	“ raly,
shut	“ shet,
singular	“ singelar,
scarcely	“ scurcely,
slippery	“ slip-pry,
shepherd (sheperd)	“ sheppud,
shadows	“ shadders,
search	“ sarch,
such	“ sich,
sep'ulchre	“ sepul'chre,
super'fluous	“ superflu'ous,
shortly	“ shawtly,
stopping	“ stopen,
shutter	“ shetter,
suffering	“ suffrin,
sorrows	“ sorrers,
strictly	“ strickly,
share	“ sheer,
society	“ siety,
satin	“ sat'n,
shallow	“ shaller,
sixth	“ six,
sought	“ sort,
steady	“ stiddy,
shining	“ shinin,
suddenly	“ suddnly,
softly	“ soffly,
Syracuse	“ Sÿracuse,
stone	“ stun,
serpent	“ sarpent,
sal-u-tary	“ saletary.

ON THE MOTIVES TO BE ADDRESSED IN THE INSTRUCTION OF CHILDREN.

NO. I.

DEAR SIR,—I told you in conversation, some time ago, that many of the motives which are often addressed in teaching children, were, it seemed to me, entirely wrong, and that more harm than good came from appealing to them. For this opinion, which is the slow conclusion of many years' expe-

rience and observation, and my deep and earnest conviction now, I have intended, as you desired, to give my reasons ; at the same time, proposing what I believe, and have found to be, efficacious substitutes for the motives I condemn. You know something of the constant occupations and illness, which have hitherto prevented my writing to you. You do not know what a disappointment and mortification it has been, not to be able to find time to write upon a subject on which I hoped to find that you agreed with me.

Now, therefore, I seize an unoccupied moment, and proceed, without further preface, to point out rapidly and in a few words, the motives which are now injuriously appealed to, and to point out those which I think ought to be presented in their stead.

The motives which, twenty years ago, were almost universally addressed for the management and instruction of children, and which, I fear, are still addressed in many schools and even families, are principally the three following :

Fear of pain,
Fear of shame,
Emulation.

And the motives which I consider high and noble, and which I believe may be effectually appealed to in the discipline of a school, as incitements to exertion, and as powerful auxiliaries in the formation of the character, are,

1. Love of approbation ;
2. Love of knowledge ;
3. Love of truth ;
4. Love of advancement ;
5. The pleasure of learning ;
6. The pleasure of exercising the generous affections ;
7. The desire of preparation for the duties of life ;
8. Desire of self-approbation ;
9. Desire of the favor of God.

These, of course, are intimately connected, and may, indeed, in some cases, seem to you identical. When I come to speak of them, however, you will find that I mean very different things by the love of knowledge and the pleasure of learning.

I propose, then, to speak briefly of these twelve topics, in their order.

But first I must say a few words, where I might, if I had time, say many, of the motives by which a teacher should himself be actuated when he undertakes the business of teaching.

The time is certainly fast passing away, in New England, if it be not already quite passed, when the person who enters upon the office of instructor, can consider himself as entering upon an unworthy or degrading employment. If entered upon in a right spirit, it is, in itself, the noblest office on earth. And the office of teaching little children, is the purest and noblest form of that office. If an angel should descend on an errand of the highest good to men of the present and future ages, he would assume the office of teacher. He could not assume a higher.

With what feelings, then, should we take it upon ourselves ? In the first place, with a solemn conviction that what we do is to affect, we know not to what extent, *immortal* beings ; that we are going to do something, to give a direction, right or wrong, to the whole future existence of these children.

In the second place, with a feeling of our great responsibility, to them and to God, for the influence that we exert over them, and for that which we fail to exert.

In the third place, with a feeling of the great privilege of co-operating with all good beings, with the Saviour and with God, in a work of this infinite importance.

If we have these feelings, we shall enter upon the work with great earnestness, with great distrust and humility, and with unflinching resolution.

The teacher must be perfectly just. Let him not imagine that he can deceive his pupils in this respect. If he be absolutely just, in intention, it will presently be found out, and if he then fails to do justice, it will be seen that it is unintentional, and his influence will not be destroyed. But if he attempts to deceive his pupils in this respect, and to *seem* just, and really to *be* partial,—the heart of every child will find him out, and he will be seen, though not a child in the school may know the *word*, to be a hypocrite.

The teacher should also have unbounded confidence in the effects of patience and affection. There are no limits to the effects which kindness may have in softening and purifying the heart, and awakening the mind to right impressions. There is probably no person living, so hardened in wickedness, as not to have his heart affected by sincere and genuine kindness. And it has been found, and it is one of the most gratifying discoveries that have ever been made, that generous kindness and confidence have an influence with the insane, when nothing else will.

The teacher should also remember that no important change can be wrought in the character of a child, or any person else, by merely human means, without time. He should therefore have patience—never-failing, untiring, inexhaustible.

The first that I shall mention of the motives which are often depended on for the government of a school, and for excitement to action, is, the fear of pain. I condemn it, because I think it a low and unworthy motive, not that it does great harm. Nor do I condemn it altogether. I have always said, and I still say, that I would not undertake to manage any school for boys, unless I had the power to punish corporally when I thought it necessary. The mere possession of the power, would usually be all that would be required. It would seldom be necessary to use it. The great objection to corporal punishment, is the fact that it excites angry passions—not only in the child, but also in the master, and much more in the latter than the former. I very distinctly remember that corporal punishment, when inflicted in a school where I was a pupil, rarely excited a permanent ill-feeling in the pupil; because it was felt to be just. Certain laws had this penalty annexed to their infraction. And, as the master was really kind and just, there was no feeling of rebellion against a consequence which the offender brought on himself. But my own experience teaches me that the effect is almost necessarily bad on the individual who inflicts the pain. It excites a horrible feeling in him, a feeling which I conceive to belong to evil spirits. But I do not see that the fear of pain necessarily perverts the character of the child.

Not so with the *fear of shame*. I believe its effects to be altogether bad. And the essence of its badness is that it can be brought to bear upon what is excellent, as readily as upon what is evil. Indeed what is noble and high-minded and pure, can more easily be turned to ridicule, than the contrary. Cruelty, hardness of heart, selfishness, the meanest of vices, can with difficulty be exposed to ridicule; while compassion, tender-heartedness, generosity, are particularly obnoxious to it.

Most children are, by nature, too susceptible of ridicule. How common it is to see children ashamed of poverty, or any appearance of poverty, or of any natural defect or peculiarity, and not ashamed of gluttony, or prophaneness, or malice!

Children of delicate temperament, great generosity, and warmth of imagination, those of the very character that needs not the influence of a severe punishment, would be made to suffer terribly from the fear of shame; while those of obtuse temperament, cowardly, and mean, and wanting in imagination, would suffer very little.

Besides, from whatever cause, our countrymen are most inordinately susceptible to the influence of ridicule, already. Is not the great want of independence which every observer must notice, owing to this? Are we not, in the highest and most absurd degree, sensitive to other people's opinions? And if we are so, would it not be unphilosophical and wanting in patriotism, to increase this national infirmity by rendering individuals more sensitive by addressing the fear of shame?

The great objection to it, however, is what I have stated, that it operates with terrible inequality and injustice; giving great pain to the fine characters that ought to be dealt delicately with, and not touching those who are, if possible, to be taken hold of by influences of all kinds.

The same objection lies against *emulation*. It operates with great force upon those noble natures that need no excitement, and passes over those dull ones whom it should be the business of discipline to move.

It must be admitted that it is a most powerful motive, perhaps the most powerful that can be put in action. But it sacrifices the higher powers to the lower—the moral to the intellectual. And herein is its condemnation. The object of the teacher ought not to be to make as good scholars as possible, by any means whatsoever; but to elevate the being as highly as possible. If the scholar is made at the expense of the man, an absolute injury, an incalculable injury is inflicted. The teacher, capable of sacrificing the moral character of his pupil to his appearance at an exhibition, or his triumph at an annual examination, is totally unworthy of his office.

Emulation, when exercised among companions and equals, almost necessarily excites the worst passions, envy, jealousy, hatred, malice. I say *almost*, because I believe that there are a few so noble in their natures, so raised above all selfishness, that they are able to see the prize for which they have been long striving, with all possible efforts, borne away by a rival, with no other feelings than gratification at his success, and resignation to their own disappointment. But these are few, *very few*. I have never known but one; and he, though a man of admirable talents and character, was so different, in many other respects, from common persons, that he passed with many for insane. I might, therefore, without departing from the truth, leave out the qualifying expression, and say, that *emulation*, as it usually operates, *excites the worst passions of the human heart*.

I speak advisedly on this point. I have watched its operation for twenty-five years with great attention; latterly, with the most earnest and solemn desire of reaching the truth. I have felt that this principle, if wrong, was doing unmeasured, infinite harm. I have therefore examined the question as one that affected something higher than the mere life of a man,—his character. I *began* many years ago, in my first essays in teaching, with appealing to emulation in every instance, as an incitement to good conduct and a stimulus to exertion in every form in which exertion could be required. And I confess I found it able to accomplish what it seemed to promise. To be at the head of a class can never be an object of indifference to a child of talent, if that is held out as the greatest good. Still less—to be at the head of a school. To gain a medal, when only one or a very few are given, and where the number of competitors is great, may be made to assume to the eye of a child an importance greater than any other object for which he can live.

I was first awakened to the evil of emulation by being obliged to bestow five medals in a class of seventy-five, after a year's exertion in their studies. I remember that I had a shudder, when it was first made known to me that I should have this to do. I already anticipated how difficult it would be to do it. I felt that I should not be able to estimate the exertions that would be made. I could at best judge by the effect, a rough and unjust mode of judging, always. I soon saw the influence of the announcement of these prizes, upon the competitors. I saw the free, manly, gener-

ous bearing of the boys towards each other which had subsisted while they were under the kindly influence of reasonable motives, giving place to jealousy and suspicion, to an inordinate desire to elevate themselves and to depreciate their fellows.

There were two amongst the number so far in advance of the rest by their natural endowments and by discipline, that they partook of these feelings in a less degree ; but even they showed them towards each other. I could not but watch the effect upon one of the number, a boy of fine natural gifts and a generous susceptible nature, but who had always been unfavorably placed, and was poorly furnished for the struggle. Week after week I saw the resolute exertions he made, without suspecting how terribly severe they were. More than once I was so much surprised at his performances that I unintentionally suspected him of having received assistance, and even visited his father's house to see if I could ascertain from whom. But I found all there so inferior to him in every respect, that I saw at once that he could have got no aid at home. Week after week I saw him growing pale and thin, and perceived his quiet, gentle temper, under the influence of this nervous excitement, becoming disturbed, impatient, and fretful. His exertions were crowned with success. He was the third, if I remember rightly, of the *fortunate five* !! But nothing, not even this hard-bought glorious success, could bring back the color to his cheek, or the bounding spirit of boyhood to his heart. In a few months, I have forgotten how many, we followed him to his grave.

There was nothing remarkable in the case of the fourth. He was one of those rough natures that seem to be little affected by things about them.

The fifth was the younger of two brothers, who had been placed,—by that cruel practice, when there are two, differing in age and still more in capacity, and brought together by that very difference of capacity which should have separated them, a practice absolutely wicked, when there is to be any competition,—in the same class. The younger, as is very common in such cases, was far superior in ability, but of a perfectly kind and generous character. He made no considerable exertion ; he seemed unwilling to outstrip his brother. He could hardly help it ; the slightest effort carried him through what his brother labored at in vain. There was no exultation when he gained the medal ; he seemed rather to be possessed by a melancholy sympathy for his disappointed brother. But the countenance of that elder brother fell. His feeling was, *for ever*, changed towards the noble little fellow, who, almost in spite of himself, had been declared victor, and towards me who had been, most unwillingly, the umpire. I often meet him : but never from that day, and it is almost twenty years ago, have I received a cordial greeting. The injustice of that day has been a blight upon his best feelings. For it was signal injustice,—he had made every possible effort and had failed, while his brother had made none, and had been successful.

G. B. E.

POSTAGES.

We would inform the public that Postmasters are authorized to frank letters, containing subscription money for newspapers. Our subscribers, and all who wish to subscribe, can, in this way, remit money to the publishers of this Journal, free from any charge of postage.

NORMAL SCHOOL AT LEXINGTON.

The *Second Term* of this Institution commenced on Wednesday, 16th ult. Candidates can still be received on making application to the Principal at the School.

November 1, 1839.

[THE COMMON SCHOOL JOURNAL; published semi-monthly by Marsh, Capen, Lyon, & Webb, No. 109 Washington-street, Boston: HORACE MANN, Editor. Price, One Dollar a year.]